

## Message Text

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TAGS: PFOR, IN, BD

SUBJECT: INDIAN STATEMENT ON THE FARAKKA ISSUE

1. INDIAN EMBASSY DCM VENKATESWARAN CALLED ON ASSISTANT SECRETARY ATHERTON SEPTEMBER 15 TO DISCUSS THE FARAKKA ISSUE AMONG OTHER MATTERS. IN COURSE OF THE DISCUSSION (SEPTEL), VENKATESWARAN HANDED OVER AN EIGHT-PAGE STATEMENT DISCRIBING INDIA'S POSITION ON THE ISSUE. FULL TEXT FOL-  
LOWS.

2. QUOTE. THE FACTS RELATING TO THE FARAKKA BARRAGE, WHICH IS AT THE CENTRE OF THE ARTIFICIAL CONTROVERSY, WHICH IS BEING SOUGHT TO BE RAISED BY BANGLADESH, ARE WELL KNOWN. GANGA, WHICH IS ESSENTIALLY AN INDIAN RIVER, IS OF TREMENDOUS IMPORTANCE TO THE INDIAN ECONOMY AND IN THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC AND CULTURAL LIFE OF THE PEOPLE INHABITING THE GANGA BASIN- FOR 90 PERCENT OF ITS LENGTH, THE  
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GANGA FLOWS THROUGH INDIAN TERRITORY. THE GEOGRAPHICAL AREA IN INDIAPENDENT ON THE GANGA WATERS IS 211 MILLION ACRES AND THE POPULATION SO DEPENDENT IS 250 MILLION, CONSTITUTING MORE THAN 40 PERCENT OF INDIA'S POPULATION.

THE PERCENTAGE CROPPING IN THE GANGA BASIN IS ONLY 90 (LESS THAN ONE CROP PER ANNUM). THE AVERAGE RAINFALL IS A MERE 30 INCHES AND ONLY ABOUT ONE-FIFTH OF THE AREA COVERED

BY THE GANGA BASIN IS AT PRESENT IRRIGATED. THE PEOPLE INHABITING THE GANGA BASIN ARE AMONG THE POOREST IN INDIA, WITH ONE OF THE LOWEST PER CAPITA INCOMES. IN VIEW OF THE INADEQUATE RAINFALL AND CHRONIC SHORTAGES, IRRIGATION IS A PRIME NECESSITY IN MOST PARTS OF THE BASIN IN INDIA.

ON THE OTHER HAND, ONLY 6.1 MILLION ACRES OF LAND AREA AND 12 MILLION PEOPLE IN THE GANGA BASIN IN BANGLADESH DEPEND ON PADMA (GANGA) WATERS. THE CROPPING PERCENTAGE IN THIS AREA IS 125 (MORE THAN ONE CROP PER ANNUM). THE AVERAGE RAINFALL IS BETWEEN 55-100 INCHES. MOREOVER, A LARGE PROPORTION OF THE AREA, WHICH IT IS FEARED, IS AFFECTED BY WATER AVAILABILITY IN THE PADMA, IS ONLY A FEW MILES WEST OF THE BRAHMAPUTRA AND MEGHNA AND CAN BE VERY WELL SERVED BY THE WATERS OF THESE RIVERS. INTERNATIONAL LAW ON THE RIGHTS OF RIPARIANS HAS NOT BEEN CODIFIED. HOWEVER, THE HELSINKI RULES OF 1966 ADOPTED BY THE INTERNATIONAL LAW ASSOCIATION, WHICH HAVE RECEIVED BROAD ACCEPTANCE BY COUNTRIES STATE: "EACH BASIN STATE IS ENTITLED, WITHIN ITS TERRITORY, TO A REASONABLE AND EQUITABLE SHARE IN THE BENEFICIAL USES OF THE WATERS OF AN INTERNATIONAL DRAINAGE BASIN". IN COMPUTING THE EQUITABLE SHARE OF THE BASIN STATE THE GEOGRAPHY AND HYDROLOGY OF THE BASIN, ECONOMIC NEEDS, POPULATION, AVAILABILITY OF OTHER RESOURCES, AVOIDANCE OF UNNECESSARY WASTE, PAST USE, CURRENT NEEDS, ETC. ARE TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT. ACCORDING TO THESE CRITERIA THE SHARE OF BANGLADESH WOULD NOT AMOUNT TO MORE THAN 5 TO 6 PERCENT OF THE FLOWS OF THE GANGA. FURTHER, ALL RIPARIAN STATES ENJOY THE RIGHT TO AN EQUITABLE SHARE OF THE WATERS OF A RIVER WITHIN THEIR OWN TERRITORIES.

THE FARAKKA BARRAGE AND THE FEEDER CANAL WERE COMMISSIONED FOLLOWING AN AGREEMENT BETWEEN INDIA AND BANGLADESH IN LIMITED OFFICIAL USE  
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APRIL 1975. AS PART OF THE AGREEMENT, IT WAS DECIDED THAT JOINT TEAMS CONSISTING OF EXPERTS OF THE TWO GOVERNMENTS WOULD OBSERVE AT APPROPRIATE PLACES IN BOTH THE COUNTRIES, THE EFFECTS OF THE WITHDRAWAL DURING THE LEAN SEASON AND WOULD SUBMIT THEIR REPORT TO BOTH THE GOVERNMENTS FOR CONSIDERATION. THE REPORT, HOWEVER, COULD NOT BE FINALISED BECAUSE BANGLADESH WAS NOT FORTHCOMING WITH NECESSARY TECHNICAL INFORMATION AND DATA NOR WAS THE INDIAN TEAM PROVIDED OPPORTUNITY TO DETERMINE THE EXTENT OF THE AREA IRRIGATED, PASSENGER AND GOODS TRAFFIC IN THE GANGA RIVER, SALINITY LEVELS, ETC.

IRRIGATION: THE MAIN REQUIREMENT OF BANGLADESH FOR GANGA WATERS IS FOR IRRIGATION UNDER THE GANGES - KOBADAK PROJECT. AT PRESENT, THE IRRIGATION FACILITIES DEVELOPED UNDER THIS PROJECT COVER ONLY AN AREA OF 75,000 ACRES

REQUIRING 1000 TO 1500 CUSECS OF WATER. THIS REQUIREMENT IS LIKELY TO GO UP BY 2500 CUSECS UNDER THE ACCELERATED IRRIGATION PROGRAMME OF BANGLADESH IN THE NEXT 10 TO 15 YEARS. ANOTHER 5,000 CUSECS MAY BE REQUIRED TO KEEP THE GORAI RIVER FLOWING DURING THE DRY SEASON. THUS, AS AGAINST A TOTAL REQUIREMENT OF 9,000 CUSECS FOR THE PRESENT AND THE NEXT 10 TO 15 YEARS, BANGLADESH WOULD HAVE AT ITS DISPOSAL AT LEAST 23000 TO 26000 CUSECS EVEN DURING THE LEANEST PART OF THE LEAN SEASON, EVEN AFTER WITHDRAWAL OF 40,000 CUSECS AT FARAKKA. (IT MUST BE NOTED THAT SOME 8000 TO 11000 CUSECS ARE GAINED BETWEEN FARAKKA IN INDIA AND HARDINGE BRIDGE IN BANGLADESH FOR THE LATTER'S EXCLUSIVE USE). AS A GESTURE OF GOODWILL AND FRIENDSHIP, ON 27TH MARCH 1976 INDIA VOLUNTARILY REDUCED THE INTAKE OF WATER INTO THE FEEDER CANAL BELOW THE MINIMUM QUANTITY REQUIRED FOR FLUSHING THE HOOGHLY, THUS RELEASING MORE WATER FOR BANGLADESH.

SALINITY: BANGLADESH HAS COMPLAINED OF SALINITY PROBLEMS AS A RESULT OF FARAKKA WITHDRAWALS. TECHNICAL EXPERTS WHO HAD VISITED BANGLADESH, HAVE FOUND THAT THE SALINITY PROBLEM HAD BEEN HIGHLY EXAGGERATED. SOME MINOR PROBLEMS HAVE BEEN OBSERVED BUT THESE ARE NEITHER NEW NOR UNIQUE AND IN ANY CASE, NOT BEYOND A TECHNICAL SOLUTION. THE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE  
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PRINCIPAL REGIONS WHERE INCREASED SALINITY INTRUSION HAS BEEN APPREHENDED VIZ., THE NEGHNA ESTUARY AND THE KHULNA AREA, ARE HARDLY AFFECTED BY THE FRESH WATER FLOWS OF THE PADMA. THE SALINITY IN THESE AREAS IS LARGELY INFLUENCED BY SALINE PENETRATION FROM THE SEA. THIS HAS BEEN ESTABLISHED BY THE FINDINGS OF INDEPENDENT STUDIES, INCLUDING THOSE OF THE WORLD BANK AS WELL AS BY JOINT INDO-BANGLADESH OBSERVATION LAST YEAR. IT MUST ALSO BE REMEMBERED THAT OVER A 1000 MILLION ACRE FEET OF WATER DRAINED INTO THE BAY OF BENGAL FROM THE RIVER SYSTEMS IN BANGLADESH CREATE A VAST FRESH WATER RESERVOIR IN THE COASTAL AREAS WHICH HELP IN EFFECTIVELY CHECKING THE PENETRATION OF SEA WATER INLAND.

NAVIGATION: AS IN THE CASE OF IRRIGATION, BANGLADESH HAS NOT MADE ANY INFORMATION AVAILABLE ON THE LIKELY EFFECT OF FARAKKA WITHDRAWALS ON NAVIGATION. OBJECTIVE STUDIES, HOWEVER, SHOW THAT WITHDRAWALS AT FARAKKA CAN HAVE LITTLE OR NO EFFECT ON NAVIGATION IN BANGLADESH- THERE ARE HARDLY ANY MECHANISED VESSELS PLYING IN THE PADMA UPTO

ITS CONFLUENCE WITH THE BRAHMAPUTRA AND THE ANNUAL TRAFFIC IN THIS REGION IS SMALL. GIVEN THE PRESENT UNPREDICTABILITY AND NEGLIGIBLE TONNAGE OF NAVIGATION ON THE PADMA, THE WITHDRAWAL OF 40,000 CUSECS AT FARAKKA WILL NOT MAKE ANY MATERIAL DIFFERENCE TO THE SITUATION. THE PROBLEMS

OF NAVIGATION, SALINITY AND UNDEFINED ECOLOGICAL PROBLEMS WHICH BANGLADESH HAS RECENTLY BEEN ATTRIBUTING TO FARAKKA WITHDRAWALS, HAVE BEEN ENDEMIC TO THE EASTERN REGION AND IF AT ALL ARE ONLY REMOTELY RELATED TO THE WITHDRAWAL OF WATER BY INDIA AT FARAKKA. INDIA IS AWARE OF THESE PROBLEMS AND THAT IS WHY IT HAS MADE A PROPOSAL FOR TACKLING THIS PROBLEM IN A WIDER FRAMEWORK, APPLYING A MULTI-DISCIPLINARY APPROACH, OF COOPERATION FOR THE DEVELOPMENT

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